

# **UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS IN THE FIRE SERVICE**

## **EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT**

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**An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy  
as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program**

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## **ABSTRACT**

“Most people enter the fire service for the activity and excitement it offers, for the challenge of protecting lives and property and for the chance to help others”(Hess & Wroblewski, 1992, p.1). These individuals generally do not consider the idea that more of their day will be spent documenting their activity than responding to emergency requests for service. “And then the rude awakening: For almost every official action they take, they must write a report” (Hess et al, 1992).

The problem is there is a lack of fire service commitment to developing and improving writing skills in the industry. The purpose of this research project was to determine the fire service’s true level of commitment to developing and improving writing skills by examining how departments evaluate and utilize these skills. This study utilized a descriptive research method. The questions researched were:

1. Do fire service leaders place a level of importance on writing skills?
2. Does the fire service evaluate employee writing skills?
3. Do writing skills play a role in the fire service promotional process?
4. What measures does the fire service take to improve employee writing skills?

Two hundred and twelve, moderate sized fire departments were asked these questions in a survey. A moderate sized department was identified as those departments with 40 to 300 employees. This sample population was selected because it most closely compared to the Hilton Head Island Fire & Rescue Department, the department conducting the research.

The results of this study demonstrate that the majority of the fire departments surveyed, 80 percent, indicated that good writing skills are very important for the fire

service. However, very few fire departments actually evaluate employee writing skills or consider writing skills in the promotional process. About half of the departments surveyed provide some form of writing skills education to their employees. It can be demonstrated through this survey that the fire service talks highly of the importance of writing skills, but does very little to support that belief.

This project recommends that the Hilton Head Island Fire & Rescue Department continue to require English courses to be completed by members prior to becoming eligible for promotional testing. It further recommends that the fire service continues to recognize the importance of writing skills and take appropriate actions to demonstrate the importance of this skill.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

“Most people enter the fire service for the activity and excitement it offers, for the challenge of protecting lives and property and for the chance to help others”(Hess & Wroblewski, 1992, p.1). These individuals generally do not consider the idea that more of their day will be spent documenting their activity than responding to emergency requests for service. “And then the rude awakening: For almost every official action they take, they must write a report” (Hess et al, 1992).

The problem is there is a lack of fire service commitment to developing and improving writing skills in the industry. The purpose of this research project is to determine the fire service’s true level of commitment to developing and improving writing skills by examining how departments evaluate and utilize these skills. This study uses a descriptive research method. The research questions are:

1. Do fire service leaders place a level of importance on writing skills?
2. Does the fire service evaluate employee writing skills?
3. Do writing skills play a role in the fire service promotional process?
4. What measures does the fire service take to improve employee writing skills?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Hilton Head Island Fire & Rescue Department (HHIFRD) is located in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. The HHIFRD is a relatively young department and is a result of the consolidation of two fire departments in 1993. Although the HHIFRD considers itself progressive, the department struggles to eliminate the two department mentality and create its own culture. The HHIFRD is constantly reviewing and updating

its Policy Manual to ensure equity in the treatment of all employees. Any policy decision made affects the department's ability to grow and mature.

The background of the applied research project begins in July 2001, when the Hilton Head Island Fire & Rescue Department was accepting letters of interest to test for an upcoming lieutenant's exam. During this time, several members of the department questioned the importance of passing two specific college courses prior to becoming eligible to test for the promotion. These courses, specified in the department's policy manual, are English Composition I and English Composition II (Hilton Head Island Fire & Rescue, 2002, p.3). Several members argued that writing skills in the fire service were only slightly important when compared to the overall mission of the department. Based on this opinion, these members suggested that the English Composition courses be removed from the eligibility process. They also argued that if writing skills were to be part of the promotional process, individual writing skills should be considered and not the completion of college level courses.

The problem addressed in this research paper relates to the importance of writing skills in the fire service. The results of the study will directly influence the department's decision related to the college course requirements for firefighter advancement. This decision will affect a majority of the department's members in the future. It will serve as a building block for the department's next leaders. The problem also relates to the National Fire Academy's *Executive Development* course, which discussed specific tools and techniques necessary to develop the future leaders of the fire service. Unit 2 of the course manual covers important topics dealing with professional development. A portion

of this section requires the reader to develop and prioritize strategies for personal growth. Writing successfully is a key strategy for personal professional growth.

The subject of this research paper is linked to the USFA's operational objective which states, "To promote within communities a comprehensive, multi-hazard risk-reduction plan led by the fire service organization"(USFA, 2001, p.II-2). Fire service organizations can conduct various studies and formulate effective risk-reduction plans for their communities. However, in order to communicate these plans with the governmental leaders and citizens of the community, the fire service leader must be able to present the plans in a well written, understandable format.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

"It is one of life's least-favorite tasks, but even the action-oriented fire service provides plenty of opportunity to generate the written word – for instance, reports and record-keeping, assessment center exercises, training and fire prevention materials"(Levy, 1999, April, p.28). A literature review was conducted to assist in determining the actual importance of developing writing skills in the fire service. Much is written about the importance of writing skills, however little was discovered on how fire departments deal with this daily activity.

When one begins discussing the importance of good writing skills within the fire service, or any organization, the first subject mentioned is often law suits. "In the present litigious climate, fire departments and prehospital providers at all levels must learn to write a legally defensible report" (Graham, 2001 p.109). Reports must be written that accurately document events faced by fire service employees as well as actions taken by these employees during particular events. "A report is a written record that



communicates important facts to be used in the future” (APCO, 2001, p.42). These reports, written in the present, will often serve the responder in the future. “Complete reports become quite important, because there may be a time when you have no independent recollection of an event and must rely solely on a report for detail” (p.43). This is especially true when the fire service or emergency medical service (EMS) employee finds himself on the witness stand as a defendant in a law suit. It is at this point where the written report will become the best or worst piece of evidence for the employee and the organization. “A fact not always considered is that the prehospital report or the run sheet is legally recognized as evidence – evidence that will either exonerate you or implicate you in a claim of wrongdoing” (Graham, 2001, p.109). For this reason, fire service and EMS personnel must understand the importance of writing a legally defensible report. It is also important that these employees are taught the proper method of writing such a report. “A legally defensible report is one that provides the proof, support, validation, confirmation, verification, authentication, or written evidence that a provider did provide care in accordance with the established standard of care” (Graham, 2001). Although none of us wish to find ourselves facing a lawsuit, it will be much easier if we have properly prepared by writing a good report. “A bad report can result in civil or criminal charges against the writer” (APCO, 2001, p.44).

Legal matters and concerns are not the only reason that developing good writing skills in the fire service is important. “We should write quality reports for both their legal and operational benefits” (Blackistone, 1998, p.40). The day-to-day operations of most departments depend upon written communication. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP’s), daily directives and special information bulletins are used by many departments

to communicate to their employees the mission and directive of the department. Records are maintained that are used to document daily activity. There are a multitude of records maintained in the fire service including training records, hose testing records, attendance records, personnel records, as well as fire inspection and investigation records (IFSTA, 1995). This list is far from inclusive, but it is easy to see that the daily operation of any fire department or EMS department is easily influenced by writing skills.

Directives are often used by chief or company officers to mandate or guide the daily activities of subordinates. These mandates or guides are intended to ensure that all employees understand the direction and goals of the department and the tasks necessary to meet these goals. Many of these directives serve as requests to meet organizational goals. The chief or company officer must understand how to adequately write the request to accomplish the goal. "An effective request includes the general details of the assignment but allows firefighters some latitude in the process" (Greenwood, 2001, p.47). Officers must be taught to write reports and directives that go into enough detail to provide adequate information, while refraining from writing too much and losing the reader's interest. "Keep you communications professional and to the point" (p.48).

In addition to the daily operations in the fire service, writing skills can prove to be critical in emergency situations. "Good documentation is a key component of effective emergency management" (Hawkins, 1998, p.62). Incident commanders or managers must understand the importance of documentation during the emergency incident. Proper, as-you-go documentation will assist the incident commander manage resources and direct activity as the incident proceeds. "Without adequate documentation, it is impossible to effectively assimilate incident facts, probabilities and resource status that

lead to command decisions where a strategy is formulated and a subsequent action plan is implemented” (p.62).

“There are several other applications for good incident documentation. It will also help with future fire department decisions on policy, procedure and safety changes” (p.62). All departments can and should learn from past events. Effective incident documentation will provide these departments “history” that can be examined and evaluated. Successes and failures can be identified by studying this history. Departments can make adjustments in policy and procedures to ensure that more successes and fewer failures occur in the future.

Large scale incidents often tax the physical and financial resources of a fire department or governmental entity. Often these departments or entities request financial assistance from state or federal agencies. This is another important area where good writing skills are crucial. “Accurate resource tracking is very important if subsequent claims are sought for financial reimbursement through such entities as FEMA” (p.63).

One other very important reason for developing writing skills in the fire service does not affect daily operations or those at the emergency incident. Developing the professional employee and future leaders depends on developing good writing skills in those employees. “According to the U.S. Department of Labor (1991) a fire chief’s language skill level should be the same as a physician” (Clark, 2001, p.10). This idea should be transmitted to those individuals just entering the fire service. If you want to become tomorrow’s fire service leader, learn how to write today. “Every basic firefighter school needs to have a writing section as part of the curriculum” (p.10). It is our responsibility to develop tomorrow’s fire service leader. Dr. Burton Clark recently

compared twenty fire service legends of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a *Fire Chief* article (Clark, 2002). Dr. Clark places great emphasis on writing and publishing fire service experiences and lessons learned. Dr. Clark's legends were published an average of 58 times. This allows us all to learn from their knowledge. We must all write about our experiences so others can gain from them. "Writing and publishing put your ideas up for critical review. Those who read it can accept, reject, ignore or build on your work" (Clark, 2002, p.51).

Those who have written about developing writing skills in the fire service emphasize the importance of such skills. The advancement of the fire service seems to rely on our ability to write effectively. However if developing writing skills is so important, why does it seem that many departments fail to recognize this or take action to improve their employees' writing skills? The creation of this question, through the literature review process, influenced the research to determine just what steps departments were actually taking to develop writing skills in the fire service.

## **PROCEDURES**

### Procedure

The desired outcome of this research was to determine how other fire departments in the state of South Carolina and across the United States dealt with the issue of developing and improving the writing skills of their employees. The results would be used to assist the HHIFRD in evaluating and possibly adjusting the current policy on firefighter advancement. A descriptive research method was utilized for this project. The research procedure used in preparing this paper included a literature review and a

questionnaire to determine how fire departments are currently treating the importance of writing skills.

The population surveyed for this project consisted of 600 fire departments. This included 40 fire departments in South Carolina and 560 fire departments located within the continental United States. All departments surveyed were career departments with all paid employees. This population was chosen because it most closely matches the circumstances of the HHIFRD. Those departments selected for the research were selected from lists published by the South Carolina Fire Chiefs Association or obtained from contacts collected by the HHIFRD. Departments were contacted through the U.S. Postal Service or through electronic mail. Once surveys were returned, only those departments with members numbering between 40 and 300 were selected. This size limitation was utilized to provide an equitable comparison between these departments and the HHIFRD. The research project utilized surveys from 212 fire departments, 14 from South Carolina and 198 from the continental United States.

Departments contacted to participate in this research project were asked to answer a variety of questions (Appendix A). The first three questions in the survey related to the make-up of the department. This information included the department's name, number of members and whether the department is classified as career, volunteer or combination. This information was utilized to identify those departments most similar to the HHIFRD.

Following the descriptive section of the survey, departments were asked to answer several questions regarding the importance of their members' writing skills and how they develop and improve writing skills within their department. Those questions include:

4. How important are good writing skills in the fire service?
5. Does your department evaluate employee writing skills?
6. If yes, How?
7. Should writing skills be considered in the promotional process?
8. Does your department consider writing skills in the promotional process?
9. If yes, How?
10. Does your department provide education to improve employee writing skills?
11. What type of training or education is provided?

The information collected through the survey process was tallied to provide a picture as to the importance of writing skills in the fire service and what measures are currently being undertaken to evaluate and improve these writing skills. This information was then utilized to formulate a recommendation for the HHIFRD.

### Limitations

Two limitations to this research method were identified. First, the research is limited based on the size of the population surveyed. Only fire departments with 40 to 300 employees were utilized in the research project. This limits the understanding of the importance of writing skills in the fire service to those departments of small to moderate size. However, the information collected from these departments best serves the needs of the HHIFRD. The second limitation of the research relates to the progressiveness of the departments surveyed. It is possible that those departments that took the time to complete the survey were primarily progressive departments that consider writing an important skill within their department.

### Definition of Terms

Writing Skills: The ability to create written communications that are grammatically correct with correct spelling and following an acceptable format.

## **RESULTS**

The results of the survey questions were tallied for comparison based on the questions asked. The first three questions of the survey were utilized to determine which departments met the research criteria established by the HHIFRD. The results of the remaining questions were utilized for evaluation in the research project. Those results are:

Question #4: How important are good writing skills in the fire service?

	Number	Percentage
Very Important	135	63.6
Somewhat Important	55	25.9
Neutral	11	5.1
Somewhat Not Important	7	3.3
Not Important	4	2.1

Table 1: Question #4 Results (n=212)

Eighty-nine percent of those departments surveyed rated the importance of writing skills in the fire service as either very important or somewhat important with 63.6 percent answering this question as very important and 25.9 percent as somewhat important. Five percent of the surveyed departments did not rate the importance of writing skills as either important or not important. Three percent of the departments rated the importance of writing skills as somewhat not important and 2 percent rated these skills as not important. Based on these results, the majority of fire departments have identified writing skills as being an important skill for the employees of their department.

Question #5: Does your department evaluate employee writing skills?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	62	30.2
No	148	69.8

Table 2: Question #5 Results (n=210)

Based on the results of question #4, the results of this question were somewhat surprising. Although the majority of the departments surveyed indicated that writing skills were important in the fire service, only 30.2 percent of those departments currently evaluate their employees' writing skills. Nearly 70% of the departments surveyed do not conduct writing skill evaluations of employees. Two fire departments did not respond to this question.

Question #6: If the answer to question #5 was yes, how?

	Number	Percentage
Annual performance evaluations	38	67.8
Daily report reviews	10	17.8
Writing skills evaluation in employment testing	6	10.7
Annual written communication exam	1	1.85
Research papers	1	1.85

Table 3: Question #6 Results (n=56)

Fifty-six of the 62 departments that indicated they evaluate employee writing skills answered this specific question. Of those 62 departments, two-thirds of those departments indicated that they evaluate writing skills through the annual performance evaluation process. Several of these departments explained that written reports are evaluated by supervisors throughout the year and this evaluation is indicated in a communication element of the performance evaluation. Ten departments, or 17.8 percent of those answering, indicated that written reports were reviewed and evaluated on a daily



basis. Two of these departments stated that employees received supervisor feedback based on these daily reviews. Two unusual evaluation methods were identified through this question. One of the surveyed departments indicated that they administer a written communication “exam” to all employees on an annual basis. This exam requires employees to write memos and other official documents that they would be expected to write based on their job description. These exams are “graded” and employees receive appropriate feedback. Another department indicated that they require their employees to write research papers as part of their on-going training program. According to the survey, this approach teaches writing skills as well as serving as a learning tool since fire service subjects are researched. Writing skills such as spelling, sentence structure and proper grammar use is a critical evaluation portion of the research paper.

Question #7: Should writing skills be considered in the promotional process?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	171	80.6
No	41	19.4

Table 4: Question #7 results (n=212)

Eighty percent or 171 departments surveyed indicated that writing skills should be evaluated and considered as part of the promotional process. Fifteen or 9 percent of the 171 departments indicating that writing skills should be considered in the promotional process, clarified their answer by indicating that writing skills should only be used when promoting chief officers. Nineteen percent of the surveyed departments indicated that writing skills should not be considered as part of the promotional process.

Question #8: Does your department consider writing skills in the promotional process?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	48	22.9
No	162	77.1

Table 5: Question #8 results (n=210)

Although many departments surveyed indicated that writing skills should be considered in the promotional process, only 48 or 22.9 percent of those surveyed indicated that these skills are evaluated as part of their promotional process. Seventy-seven percent or 162 of the surveyed departments are currently not considering writing skills when promoting individuals within their departments. The results of this question are very similar to those in question #5, where only 30 percent of the departments surveyed evaluate employee writing skills. Two departments did not answer this question.

Question #9: If the answer to question #8 was yes, how?

	Number	Percentage
Assessment center	33	68.7
Performance review	12	25
Writing assignment	1	2.2
Other/Non -specific	2	4.1

Table 6: Question #9 results (n=48)

Forty-eight surveyed departments indicated that they consider writing skills in the promotional process. Thirty-three or 68.7 percent of these departments indicated that they utilize an assessment center to evaluate writing skills in the promotional process. Many of these departments indicated that an “In-basket” exercise was often utilized to evaluate these skills. Candidates must write memos or other documents to address situations they encounter in the in-basket exercise. Twenty-five percent of those departments considering writing skills as part of their promotional process indicated that they conduct performance reviews and a written communication element is a portion of

this review process. One department assigns those individuals participating in the promotional process a written assignment to complete. This written assignment may be the development of a lesson plan, preparation of a standard operating procedure or the creation of a detailed media release. Two departments answered this question in a non-specific manner and the exact method used could not be determined.

Question #10: Does your department provide education to improve writing skills?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	118	55.6
No	94	44.4

Table 7: Question #10 results (n=212)

An almost even divide was observed in those departments that do and do not provide education to their employees to improve and develop writing skills. Fifty-five percent of those departments surveyed indicated that they provide some form of education or training to their employees to improve writing skills. Forty-four percent of those departments indicated that their departments did not provide education specifically designed to improve or develop writing skills within their departments.

Question #11: If the answer to question #10 was yes, what type of training/education?

	Number	Percentage
College Courses	44	37.2
Report writing training	31	26.2
Officer training	19	16.1
State offered courses	18	15.2
NFA	4	3.3
Other	2	2

Table 8: Question #11 results (n=118)

Forty-four departments of those that provide writing education indicated that they provide college level courses to their employees in an effort to improve or develop

writing skills. This equals 37.2 percent of those departments. Thirty-one departments offer or require in-house, report writing training for their employees. Nineteen departments indicated that their employees receive writing skill develop training while participating in officer training programs. It could not be determined if these programs were in-house programs or provided by an outside agency. Eighteen departments stated that they send employees to state sponsored courses designed to improve employee writing skills. Four departments, or 3 percent, indicated that they utilize the National Fire Academy courses as a method to improve their employees' writing skills. Two departments provided non-specific information that could not be classified.

After tallying the results from the survey, information obtained was used to answer the original research questions. These results follow:

Research question #1: Do fire service leaders place a level of importance on writing skills? The simple answer to this question is a resounding yes. In fact, 63.6 percent of those departments surveyed indicated that writing skills were "very important." Almost 30 percent of those surveyed answered this question with "somewhat important." Only ten percent of those surveyed indicated that writing skills were slightly or not important.

Research question #2: Does the fire service evaluate employee writing skills? The answer to this question is unfortunately, no. Of the departments responding to this survey question, only 30 percent of them indicated that they evaluate employee writing skills. This leaves 70 percent of the departments surveyed not evaluating employee writing skills.

Research question #3: Do writing skills play a role in the fire service promotional process? Currently, writing skills play only a minor role in the promotional process within the fire service. Much like the findings in the first research question, many departments indicated that writing skills should be considered as part of the promotional process, but only a few actually followed through with this belief. Seventy-seven percent of the surveyed departments indicated that they do not consider writing skills in the promotional process. Those departments that do consider writing skills in the process, generally depend on some type of assessment center and not a specific writing skills activity.

Research question #4: What measures does the fire service take to improve employee writing skills? Only half of the departments surveyed indicated that they provide some form of education or training to improve employee writing skills within their department. Half of these departments utilize college courses or specific, in-house technical writing courses for their employees. Other departments utilize state or national fire academies to provide this training to their employees.

The results of this survey assist in clarifying the importance of writing skills in the fire service. Good writing skills in the fire service are seen as being important. However, the fire service does not take steps to develop and improve the writing skills of fire service employees.

## **DISCUSSION**

The importance of good writing skills cannot be questioned. Eighty-nine percent of the fire departments surveyed indicated that good writing skills were important. Many departments are “realizing that writing is an indispensable skill for tasks such as record-

keeping and testing”(Levy, 1999, p. 20). We have all learned that our written records can and will be used in courts when facing lawsuits. We have all been told, “if it isn’t written it didn’t happen. While that saying is not absolutely true, it certainly is a premise that can minimize enormous future problems” (Blackistone, 1998, p. 40).

Legal issues are not the only reason to improve writing skills in the fire service. Written reports and communication shape the future of the fire service. “Reporting procedures help instructors, who must educate and train new people to write reports. These procedures ensure everyone has the same information and will be prepared properly for the challenges ahead”(p.40). The professional development of our employees and future leaders depend upon developing strong writing skills.

Writing skills must be evaluated and utilized in selecting those individuals for promotion within the fire service. “In the National Fire Protection Association (1997) Fire Fighter I and II Professional Qualification standards, writing skills are identified 15 times. *Communicate in writing* is listed 40 times as a prerequisite skill in the Fire Officer I, II, III and IV standards”(Clark, 2001, p. 10). How can we ensure our employees have these desired skills if we are not evaluating them? In this survey, only 30 percent of the departments surveyed are evaluating employee writing skills. Only 23 percent of the surveyed departments are considering the writing skills of those individuals promoted to supervisory positions. “Unfortunately, not all company officers have the skill to effectively issue orders without confusing or offending others or alienating themselves”(Greenwood, 2001, p. 47). The fire service must take the appropriate steps to ensure that those individuals promoted are capable of serving in their new positions. It is our duty to ensure that the newly promoted officers are ready to deal with the

emergencies that they will face. This includes being capable of properly documenting incidents. “Good documentation is a key component of effective emergency management”(Hawkins, 1998, p. 62).

The fire service must prepare the future leaders by providing them the necessary training and education to develop and improve their writing skills. “Every basic firefighter school needs to have a writing section as part of the curriculum”(Clark, 2001, p.10). Through this research, we see that 55.6 percent of the surveyed departments provide some form of writing education/training to their employees. Why isn’t this number 100 percent? “We must include reading and writing throughout our training, education and practice from entry level to top scholar/practitioner to achieve these standards and increase our professionalism”(p.10).

The results of this research indicate that although writing skills are seen as being important in the fire service, very little emphasis is placed on these skills in the development of leaders within the departments. When examined, only a small minority of departments are evaluating employee writing skills and even a smaller number are using these evaluations when promoting employees. This is a concern since over half of the departments surveyed are providing some type of education or training to develop employee writing skills. Are we not evaluating what we teach? We do not teach a firefighter how to use an SCBA and not evaluate him on his use of this very important piece of equipment! Why should writing skills be any different? If it is important, evaluate it.

Based on this research, the Hilton Head Island Fire & Rescue Department finds itself ahead of many other fire service organizations surveyed. The HHIFRD is providing

writing skill development education and evaluating these skills in the promotional process. Although the evaluation is actually conducted by an outside agency, the local community college, the skills have been identified and an evaluation tool selected. The implication of this research is the idea that the HHIFRD is on the right track concerning the importance of developing writing skills within the organization.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the results of the survey, developing writing skills in the fire service is considered very important. The Hilton Head Island Fire & Rescue Department should continue to require employees to successfully pass college level English courses prior to becoming eligible to sit for the lieutenant's exam. Although very few fire departments are currently evaluating employee writing skills or considering them in the promotional process, the successful fire service leader must possess good writing skills. This is important for the daily operations of the individual fire company as well as the department as a whole. Today's lieutenant can easily become tomorrow's chief. We must prepare these future leaders. Because of this, the HHIFRD should do much more than require English courses. The department must place additional emphasis on the importance of writing skills and take steps to include these skills in all levels of training.

In addition, the fire service as a whole should place more emphasis on writing skills in the industry. Few departments surveyed are actively seeking to improve their employees' writing skills and even fewer are evaluating writing skills when considering members for advancement within the organization. It is obvious that we all believe good writing skills are a must for ourselves and our employees. However, we do nothing to



encourage development and improvement of these skills. It is time to take action in order to prepare and improve the fire service leaders of tomorrow.

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**APPENDIX A**

**HILTON HEAD ISLAND FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT  
40 SUMMITT DRIVE  
HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC 29926  
(843) 682-5100  
(843) 682-5146 fax**

June 3, 2002

Dear Chief,

I am currently enrolled in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. A requirement of the program is the completion of a research paper. I have decided to research the importance of developing good writing skills within the fire service. In order to complete this paper, I am surveying as many departments as possible. Please take a few moments and complete the attached survey. I appreciate any assistance you can provide for this project.

The completed survey can be faxed to me at the above number or e-mailed to: [randyo@ci.hilton-head-island.sc.us](mailto:randyo@ci.hilton-head-island.sc.us). The results of the survey will be available by September 1, 2002. If you are interested in the results let me know and I will forward them to you. Thank you again for your assistance.

Sincerely,

*Randall S. Osterman*

Randall S. Osterman  
Battalion Chief

## APPENDIX B

Randall Osterman, Battalion Chief  
Hilton Head Island Fire & Rescue  
40 Summit Drive  
Hilton Head Island, SC 29926  
(843) 682-5140  
(843) 682-5146 Fax

The purpose of this survey is to help identify the importance of developing writing skills in the fire service.

Please take a moment and complete the following survey. When completed, please return the survey by fax or by e-mail to [randyo@ci.hilton-head-island.sc.us](mailto:randyo@ci.hilton-head-island.sc.us). Your cooperation in this effort is greatly appreciated.

1. Name of Department: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of members on the Department: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Type of Department: (Circle One)                      Career                      Volunteer                      Combination
4. How important are good writing skills in the fire Service? (Circle One)  
          Very Important    Somewhat Important    Neutral    Somewhat Not Important    Not Important
5. Does your department evaluate employee writing skills?    Yes                      No
6. If yes, How? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Should writing skills be considered in the promotional process?    Yes    No
8. Does your department consider writing skills in the promotional process?    Yes    No
9. If yes, How? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Does your department provide education to improve employee writing skills?    Yes                      No
11. If yes, what type of training/education? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Survey results will be made available after September 1, 2002. Requests should be sent to at [randyo@ci.hilton-head-island.sc.us](mailto:randyo@ci.hilton-head-island.sc.us).